

NOVENA FOR THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF MARY

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends of Nano,

As we prepare to celebrate our Congregational Feast – the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, we are invited to join together in prayer and contemplation as we ponder once again the Mystery at the heart of Mary of the Presentation.

*We are most grateful to our Presentation Sisters in Victoria, Australia who prepared the **Nine Days** reflective prayer for our Novena this year.*

*As we live through this very different time in our world, when we are standing on uncertain ground because of the pandemic, **Nine Days** invites us into a reflective space, to listen deeply like Mary, to God's invitation for us.*

May Mary bless us with the gifts of contemplative listening, prophetic courage and faith-filled commitment as we continue to go deep into our unfolding Presentation journey with hope!

Wishing you Blessings as we celebrate this special Feast of Mary of the Presentation,

Julie Venith Hurea Sharon Lane

Nine Days invites us into a reflective space to contemplate the Mystery at the heart of Mary of the Presentation.

We reflect on those iconic Gospel moments which give shape to our understanding and naming of Mary as core to our Presentation spirit and tradition.

We are attuned, as was Mary, as was Nano, to God's call coming to us from the depths of our own experience in our own life.

Nine Days offers space and silence, sacred time and stillness.

In this year of 2020, a year none of us could have imagined, we allow ourselves to rest in God's presence, trusting and patient, letting life unfold and draw us ever deeper into the Mystery before us.

Presentation Sisters Victoria, Australia Presentation Day 2020

DAY ONE:

Behold the handmaid of the Lord...Luke 1:38

Presentation Mary, by your unconditioned Yes, lean down to us who stammer out our weak assent and tremble lest God take us at our word.

By your swift love, redeem our paltriness, when with a sparing hand we dole from what, unmeasured, has been heaped on us.

Without a backward glance you followed when He led to Calvary. Come, lest from that all-demanding love we turn, Lot's wife, immobile, hard as stone.

Ah, Mary, little one whom God raised from the depths unto the heights, help us, we pray, grow small enough again to marvel at the wonder of our call.

Raphael Consedine pbvm

Let us pray:

You wait for us until we are open to you.

We wait for your word to make us receptive.

**Attune us to your voice, to your silence, speak and bring your son to
us –**

Jesus the word of your peace.

Huub Oosterhuis: *Your Word is Near* p.17

DAY TWO:

Mary went into the hill country with haste...

and stayed with Elizabeth about three months. Luke 1:39,56

The Visitation

In the morning it takes the mind
a while to find the world again,
lost after dream has taken the
heart to the underworld to play
with the shades of lives not
chosen.

She awakens a stranger in her
own life, Her breath loud in the
room full of listening. Taken
without touch, her flesh feels the
grief of belonging to what cannot
be seen.

Soon she can no longer bear to
be alone. At dusk she takes the
road into the hills. An anxious
moon doubles her among the
stone.

A door opens, the older one's
eyes fill.

Two women locked in a story of
birth. Each mirrors the secret the
other heard.

John O'Donohue: *Conamara Blues* p.63

Let us pray:

With every step we take, this blessing rises up to meet us. It has been waiting long ages for us. Look close and we can see the layers of it, how it has been fashioned by those who walked this road before us, how it has been created of nothing but their determination and their dreaming, how it has taken its form from an ancient hope that drew them forward and made a way for them when no way could be seen.

Look closer and we will see this blessing is not finished, that we are part of the path it is preparing, that we are how this blessing means to be a voice within the wilderness and a welcome for the way.

Jan Richardson: *Circle of Grace* p. 37

DAY THREE:

...the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son...Luke 2:6,7

One has to think of him as her son: looking very like her, with her walk, her gestures, her patterns of thought, many of her tastes and then remember that this is not some fine mask for another being within, but the human cast of his very self.

She gave him the humanity that was his; a humanity including her kind of feeling for him...this

Yeshua, this peasant, this child of this Mary. Fed when he needed feeding, taught when he needed teaching, pushed and held back when he needed them both.

His strength and his weakness, his haunting peculiarity and his rough and sweat-stained familiarity bound up inextricably, forever with her own.

Peter Steele SJ

Let us pray:

God our beloved, born of a woman's body, you came that we might look upon you, and handle you with our own hands.

May we so cherish one another in our bodies that we may also be touched by you; through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Janet Morley: *All Desires Known* p.6

DAY FOUR:

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many..., and a sword will pierce your own soul too...' Luke 2:34-35

The Second Music

Now I understand that there are two melodies playing, one below the other, one easier to hear, the other lower, steady, perhaps more faithful for being less heard yet always present.

When all other things seem lively and real, this one fades. Yet the notes of it touch as gently as fingertips, as the sound of the names laid over each child at birth.

I want to stay in that music without striving or cover. If the truth of our lives is what it is playing, the telling is so soft that this mortal time, this irrevocable change, becomes beautiful. I stop and stop again to hear the second music.

I hear the children in the yard, a train, then birds. All this is in it

and will be gone. I set my ear to
it as I would to a heart.

Annie Lighthart: *Iron String*

Let us pray:

Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times, who testify to its endurance amid the unendurable, who bear witness to its persistence when everything seems in shadow and grief. Blessed are you in whom the light lives, in whom the brightness blazes – your heart a chapel, an altar where in the deepest night can be seen the fire that shines forth in you in unaccountable faith, in stubborn hope, in love that illumines every broken thing it finds.

Jan Richardson: *Circle of Grace* p.47

DAY FIVE:

He then went with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. Luke 2:51

The Gift

Be still, my soul and steadfast.
Earth and heaven both are still
watching though time is draining
from the clock and your walk,
that was confident and quick, has
become slow.

So, be slow if you must, but let
the heart still play its true part.
Love still as once you loved,
deeply and without patience. Let
God and the world know you are
grateful. That the gift has been
given.

Let us pray:

May the years take us deeper in our loving. May the changing in our bodies open doorways in our souls. May we have words to tell of love long past innocence yet grown wise with the seasons and ripe with wonders still to be found.

Jan Richardson: *In the Sanctuary of Women*
p.302

DAY SIX:

The mother of Jesus was there... “Do whatever he tells you.”

John 2:1,5

Cana

It might have been a neurotic’s
paradise, With all that water
there for endless washing.

The catering shaky, and most of
us wondering

What sort of promise such a
beginning held

For the couple’s days and years.
And then the wine

Ran out, clean out. What do you
say – ‘One always

Likes to be moderate at these
affairs’? –

When what you mean is,
‘There’s more need than they

Can possibly provide for.’
Anyhow,

After a while they gave us wine
in flagons, the kind of thing it was
a privilege

To drink or think about. I still
don’t know

Where they found it, how they
bought it, why

They kept it until then. I do
remember,

Late in the piece, a man who
made some toasts

And drank as if he meant them,
and then left,

His mother looking thoughtful:
that, and the jars For water, and
the way they seemed to glow.

Peter Steele sj: *Marching on Paradise* p.37

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for inviting us to your table, for here you show us our lives: the daily bread of our work and care, the wine of delight pressed from the fruits of our creativity and our brokenness. We celebrate the life that is ours, the life that is precious in your sight. We celebrate the life that is yours, pattern of reality for us. We celebrate the life that is love revealed, love given and received, love that is lived.

Cf Kathy Galloway in *Celebrating Women* p.100

DAY SEVEN:

*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother...*John 19:25

Pieta

A year ago you came early into
the light. You lived a day and
night, then died; no-one to
blame.

Once only, with one hand, Your
mother in farewell touched you. I
cannot tell, I cannot understand

a thing so dark and deep, So
physical a loss:

One touch, and that was all She
had of you to keep. Clean
wounds, but terrible, are those
made with the Cross.

James McAuley: *Anthology of Australian
Religious Poetry* p.154

Let us pray:

May we know the slow mystery in which mourning becomes solace, turning us toward the kindness that wants to meet us in our grief. May comfort come to enfold us, not to take away all sorrow but to infuse it with tenderness, with rest, with every grace it has.

Cf Jan Richardson: *The Cure for Sorrow* p.168

DAY EIGHT:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Acts 2:1

To Our Lady Mother of all that is good, of the light that is always touching the world blessing all things, the efficient system of each leaf, the dark impasses of the lines of my hand, you tell us of the stone's astonishment at its sudden warmth at the first beam of light, of the horizons of dust that cry to the clouds *Give us your fullness and let us live.*

You take from us the mounds of darkness we bury inside of us

and make from them a night of stars where we can see your Son;

Our Lady, withheld from death, Mother of all things that must die, speak for us, do what we cannot do ourselves, help us to hold in our hands the bird in flight, to pull from our feet our heavy shadows, to walk your way.

Kevin Hart: *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry* p.152

Let us pray:

We worship you, Holy Spirit of God, and we may only guess, as best we can, who you are for us. We open our hearts to receive you that we may learn how deeply and invisibly you are present everywhere. You are the air we breathe, the distance we gaze into, the space that surrounds us. You are the kindly light in which we are attractive to

each other. You are the finger of God with which God playfully ordered the universe. You are the sensitive love with which God created us. We pray to you, Spirit of God, creator, complete the work you have begun, inspire us toward what is good – to faithfulness and patience, to compassion and gentleness, and waken in us friendship for every living being and with joy for all that is good.

Cf Huub Oosterhuis: *Your Word is Near* p.117

DAY NINE:

Our eyes search to see as you saw. Our hearts yearn to know as you knew... Be light for our darkness. Be dawn for our new day.

Raphael Consedine pbvm: *Presentation – Mary of the Dawn*

This is what was bequeathed us:
This earth the beloved left And,
leaving, Left to us.

No meaning but what we find
here. No purpose but what we
make.

No other world But this one:
Willows and the river And the
factory With its black
smokestacks.

That, and the beloved's clear
instructions: Turn me into song;
sing me awake.

Gregory Orr: *How Beautiful the Beloved*

No other shore, only this bank
On which the living gather.

Let us pray:

May God, who comes to us in the things of this world, bless our eyes and be in our seeing. May Christ, who looks upon us with deepest love, bless our hearts and enliven our loving. May the Spirit, who perceives what is and what may yet be, bless our minds and sharpen

our understanding. May the Sacred Three bless us all and be our centre, our focus, our practice and our feast.

Cf Jan Richardson: *In the Sanctuary of Women* pp.192, 199